



Guidelines for Local Ancestral Tourism Forums

As more and more people become interested in researching their family roots, ancestral tourism promises new and exciting year-round commercial opportunities whatever your size and type of business. With over 50million people across the globe able to lay claim to Scottish ancestry, the scope and potential of this market in tourism terms is huge.

For five years Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and VisitScotland have been working together with industry through the Ancestral Tourism Initiative (ATI) to identify opportunities for the development of tourism using genealogy as a driver.

Some areas have found that Ancestral Tourism Forums are a good mechanism for taking forward ancestral product development at local level. A number of areas already have such groupings or are actively developing them.

If you're thinking of establishing a group in your local area, these practical guidelines and tips may help you:

How should your forum be structured?

The structure of these groups varies from area to area, however in most cases the groups are being led by the public sector with active private sector input and participation. Local Authorities have tended to take the lead in setting up these groups simply because they tend to own or manage much of the ancestral tourism product on the ground.

What is the optimum size for a local forum?

We would suggest that you aim to have a maximum of 12 representatives in total from the public/private sector. This should ensure that you get a healthy turnout at meetings and will facilitate constructive discussion and positive action.

How important is it to have private sector representation on these forums?

Private sector representation on groups is vital if you are to engage effectively with the local businesses community! Try to ensure a good mix of visitor attractions and accommodation, and consider inviting other sectors such as retail onto the group. Remember – ancestral tourism is everybody's business!

Should we invite genealogists/local family historians to sit on the forum?

Although genealogy and family history are key components of any ancestral tourism product, it is important to remember that these groups are being set up primarily to develop tourism! The agendas for these groups should therefore be tourism-driven. However you may wish to consider inviting representatives from your local Family

History Society and/or a local genealogist to sit on your group, as it will be important to develop working partnerships with family history-related bodies.

What responsibilities should individual forum members have?

Forum members should be encouraged to act as ‘ambassadors’ for ancestral tourism by disseminating information and positive messages to other businesses they come into contact with.

Forums also work best if individual members are given specific actions to take forward and are required to report back to the group regularly. In this way forums become a focus for action rather than ineffective ‘talking shops’.

Does our forum need to be legally constituted?

There is no requirement for you to be a legally constituted body, however it may be helpful if you wish to apply for funding as most funding organisations will only accept applications from constituted bodies.

What should the remit of our group be?

It is important to give your group a focus and something to aim for by a specific date. ‘Meeting fatigue’ will set in if you do not have specific goals and objectives which are addressed each time you meet!

At an early stage in the development of your group, you should therefore look at developing an ‘action plan’ that identifies what you aim to do by when, and how you will fund your activities. If funds are available, consider commissioning a ‘facilitator’ to undertake a half-day workshop to audit your existing ancestral product and brainstorm product development ideas and goals.

Your action plan should then become a working document which is the focus of the agenda for each meeting.

Where should our focus lie?

VisitScotland co-ordinates a national marketing campaign to encourage visitors to come home to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors. The focus of local ancestral tourism forums should therefore be on product development, with a particular focus on improving the quality of the visitor experience at local level.

What type of product development initiative should we be looking at?

The product development activity you undertake will vary according to local circumstances, however specific initiatives you may wish to consider are:

- *Carrying out an ‘audit’ of the ancestral tourism product available on the ground in your area. This will allow you to identify any gaps which need to be filled.*
- *Developing an ancestral tourism action plan, detailing what you will do by when.*
- *Developing a local ancestral information pack which can be distributed to front line tourism businesses and TICs to enable staff to deal more effectively with ancestral enquiries.*

- *Developing an ancestral tourism web portal to signpost potential ancestral tourists to detailed local research resources, plus sites of ancestral interest on the ground.*
- *Developing an ancestral events programme in the run up to 2009 Year of Homecoming.*
- *Facilitating the development of ancestral partnerships and packages in the local area.*

How can we avoid duplication of effort?

One of the things ancestral tourists find difficult is that information on the ground is often very fragmented. You should therefore focus your efforts on making it easier for ancestral tourists to access the information they need through 'signposting' to other websites and sources of information, rather than duplicating information that already exists.

Who can we turn to for help?

Gillian Harrower, the Ancestral Tourism Product Development Manager, will be delighted to help with advice and practical suggestions for developing your local forum, and can also share information on the types of activities being undertaken by other groups across Scotland.

Please get in touch with Gillian at an early stage to discuss any support and assistance you require.

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Who can help us with marketing advice?

Ancestral Scotland, the consumer marketing campaign which aims to attract visitors to Scotland to research their ancestral roots, carries out a wide range of marketing activities across the world each year.

There are opportunities for ancestral tourism businesses and local groups to get involved in many of these campaigns. The Ancestral Marketing Manager at VisitScotland (Natalie Moffat), can give you advice on marketing your group's products to potential ancestral tourists. Alternatively you can contact the Business Relationship Manager at your local VisitScotland office. The Business Relationship Managers for each area are listed on www.visitscotland.org

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